

Dulcie September and the non-existent 'death squads in Europe'

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A friend sent me some articles that appeared recently in the Cape Times. They deal with the murder of Dulcie September, ANC-representative in Paris, then, in 1988. The murder, of the middle-aged former schoolteacher who fought apartheid, is quite some time ago (25 years next year) indeed. And it is still unresolved.

So far, the Cape Times writers are correct. But that is where it ends. They don't seem to be aware of any other fact or detail concerning the much-investigated murder of one of the South African Cape's most legendary freedom fighters. They stick to the disputed, knee-jerk theory that the assassination of Dulcie September was 'part of a South African (apartheid) operation to eliminate senior ANC figures' in Europe. This theory was bandied about in 1988 in a press statement from the ANC's Lusaka office and believed, even then, only by some of the most superficial minds in the ANC. (It is true that the South African Truth & Reconciliation Commission ended up adopting the same theory, but observers such as the South African History Archives have, many times, expressed serious misgivings about the way the TRC handled this case, particularly about the fact that so many 'Dulcie files' remain closed and hidden. More about that below.)

Even at the time of the murder, in 1988, people ranging from Aziz Pahad (then Dulcie's superior officer, based in London) to then anti-apartheid arms sanctions supremo Abdul Minty had expressed reservations about this theory. Because, even without evidence (I found evidence later), it was a bit of a stretch to believe in 'apartheid death squads' roaming Europe. To believe this theory, one had to accept, A, that apartheid death squads went about killing ANC representatives in Europe (they did not, Dulcie September was the only one); B, that Dulcie September was a 'senior figure' in the ANC (she was not), and C, that 'apartheid death squads' would kill a -very nice and brave, but fairly low level and non-influential- schoolteacher in Paris, on the eve of negotiating time in South Africa. This was a time when the SA regime was seeking the sympathy and helping hand of France and other European countries. It would have been rather foolish to risk the much-desired trading or diplomatic alliances by killing, on an allies' doorstep, someone who did not present a real threat.

Yes, the South African apartheid government was bad and murderous and

racist. It killed in South Africa and outside South Africa in the front line and neighbouring states : Swaziland, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Angola and Mozambique, yes, because there was a freedom struggle with weapons going on in those countries. But those countries' governments were not internationally powerful and South Africa did not exactly gun for friendship with them anyway. There was a war on, there. It wasn't on in Europe.

I should know how silly that 'death squads in Europe' theory was, because I myself believed it for two whole years, as I went about investigating the case. Boy, did I chase those 'apartheid death squads'! For a long time I thought that I was just inept, that they were there but I could not find them.

Then again, these death squads, too, were inept. There were rumours about another planned, but sabotaged, hit of at least fifteen ANC-members in London, there was a 'failed' hit in Belgium, they were said to be 'recruiting' in Portugal, there were rumours, again, about a hit in Amsterdam, which also never happened. What kind of a death squad was this, that was so incredibly unsuccessful, only killing one of a total of more than twenty unarmed, all-civilian, non-trained individuals, they had on 'hit lists'? Yet, the death squad was simultaneously so super-shadowy that, in two years, my sources in the Dutch, French and English secret services could not point me to even one tangible footprint of it.

In mitigation, the Cape Times can perhaps be forgiven for basing its reporting on what the Truth and Reconciliation Commission concluded : that the murder of Dulcie September was the work of French mercenaries contracted by South Africa. Or can it? The many, many published reports from the South African History Archives, expressing concern about the closed, lost and hidden 'Dulcie files' of the TRC; the mysterious circumstances under which Jan Ake Kjellberg, Swedish police investigator in charge of the Dulcie case in the TRC, was dismissed and sent home to Stockholm by TRC boss Bheki Minyuku; the many thwarted attempts by journalists to follow up on Dulcie's case, the years it took to get French police files translated (if they ever were), the TRC's refusal to request secret service files from the French authorities, the fact that the TRC conclusion was, finally, based on a rumour overheard by Eugene de Kock (who did bad things as commander of Vlakplaas, but who had absolutely nothing to do with any European operations); the falsehood that the French investigating officer, judge Claudine Forkel, concluded that French mercenaries were to blame (she didn't, she simply closed the case without a conclusion), should have alerted any reporter that there was something fishy going on.

The Cape Times reporters, missing these TRC-related clues, also missed the lecture given in 2009 at the University of the Witwatersrand, by Jacana publisher Maggie Davey, (<http://bookslive.co.za/blog/2009/08/17/maggie-daveys-unpublished-dulcie-se>) on the Dulcie September case. In the widely publicized lecture, Davey asked why the book I published in the Netherlands (in 2001, <http://www.bo1.com/nl/p/dulcie/666861500/>) about the murder, had not been published in South Africa; why had Jacana, which had spent much time and energy on getting the SA edition ready, suddenly decided to pull the plug? . The answer was that both Davey and I, and Jacana Publishers as a whole, had been threatened by people in the arms industry, and politicians and consultants connected to it.

Jacana had concluded that it was too much of a risk and the book plan was shelved.

But Davey did tell the world what had been in the book : that Dulcie September had investigated nuclear arms deals between Pretoria and Paris, and that she was killed to prevent her from making this an issue within the ANC. Newspapers other than the Cape Times picked this it up. So did the NPA, which said it would consider reopening the September case after they understood that : <http://www.iol.co.za/news/south-africa/unsolved-murder-of-activist-is-reopened-1.456016#.UB-92011TXM>. (As with so many NPA pronouncements, they don't seem to have actually started re-investigating. Still, it was a nice plan). Then in 2010, Maggie Davey and I came to Cape Town to discuss murders, the SA arms deal, and my book. <http://www.revolution-for-sale.blogspot.nl/2010/06/impressions-forum.html>. The Cape Times missed this, too.

Then recently, the Mail & Guardian, wrote about the case and the 'nuclear issues' again : <http://mg.co.za/article/2011-06-17-september-shot-for-nuke-secrets/>. The M & G picked this up from a French documentary, which also highlighted my 'arms trade and secret service' findings : <http://www.leblogtvnews.com/article-service-secret-la-part-d-ombre-de-la-republique-canal-73079739.html>. In the documentary, and reported by Mail & Guardian, Aziz Pahad confirms on camera that Dulcie's murder was motivated by 'nuclear secrets'.

This was, by the way, not the first time that Mail & Guardian highlighted my findings contradicting the simple 'death squad' theory. M & G had already published my first report in 1998 : <http://www.mg.co.za/article/1998-01-09-on-the-twisted-trail-of-dulcies-death>.

All this has escaped the Cape Times's reports on a recent court case started by French mercenary, Richard Rouget, in Paris, where he, Rouget, demanded, and succeeded, to clear his name in the Dulcie September case. Because that is the 'news angle' used by the Cape Times in May 2012 : that Rouget has launched, and won, a defamation case against a French secret service official who, in his memoirs, rehashes the old 'apartheid death squad' theory and names Richard Rouget as the 'death squad' leader in the pay of South Africa who assassinated Dulcie September. In their series of reports, the Cape Times makes believe that this is news and that, though Rouget won his defamation case, the old theory of the 'death squad' still stands. This is exactly what happened in 1988 : then, too, media fell in line behind the 'apartheid death squad theory' stories, that were, then, too, bandied about by the French secret service, and some in the ANC, who probably felt (and feel) it convenient to leave the matter at 'death squads', and avoid unsettling questions about arms deals, talks about which already started between ANC officials and the French government in 1989.

Far be it from me to feel sympathy for mercenaries, especially the kind that is now in Mogadishu, Somalia, fighting an ill-advised 'war on terror' under American supervision, as Richard Rouget is doing presently. But that is another story. As far as the Dulcie September case is concerned, Rouget has a point. He was framed by the French secret service. The person used by the DGSE to accuse him was his, Rouget's, ex-girlfriend, Antonia Soton, who, after having lived with him and other French legionnaires on the Comoro Islands, was -now

that she had stopped liking Rouget-, helped to start a new life in Paris, most likely by the French secret service. This help was given in exchange for her help in pinning the murder on a 'South African death squad' and Richard Rouget.

I know this because I have extensively researched the Antonio Soton-Richard Rouget affair. I interviewed the journalist, Claude Moniquet, who was the source of the French DGSE official now taken to court by Rouget ; I interviewed Rouget, spoke telephonically to Antonia Soton and met, for a long interview, Antonia's mother, Josyane Soton-Henrion, in the basement of a French boutique on the Avenue Pierre 1e de Serbie in Paris. I learned then what I know now : that Antonia had pretended to want to reconcile with Rouget, then took a trip through Europe with him, only to fabricate a 'witness' statement where she was evidently with Rouget in places where he would have 'conspired' to kill 'ANC targets'. She conveniently told the journalist Claude Moniquet, mentioned above, about what she had 'witnessed' and she did so, says Moniquet, on the evening before Dulcie September was killed.

Taking all into account, if it seems probable that it wasn't the mercenary, Richard Rouget who knew, on 28 March 1988 that Dulcie September was going to be killed the next day. It was French secret service agent Antonia Soton who knew that. And she knew, too, that she was to 'get Rouget' and his 'death squad' for this murder, if she wanted to forget her past and start her new life, with her new lover, and her new baby (she was 8 months pregnant at the time), in Paris.

After all these efforts, by myself, by French journalists, by Maggie Davey, by an NGO in Cape Town, by SAHA, by Mail & Guardian and others, to bring to daylight the context of the murder of Dulcie September, it is disappointing to see that reputable newspapers still don't know about investigating, -or even googling-, historically and geographically, the apparent simplicity of things. This is all the more saddening because there have been other murders like this one. SWAPO's Anton Lubowski was killed after trying to stop diamond-and-oil deals that rapacious, mafia-type investors linked to South Africa's secret services wanted to secure for themselves in Namibia (See my report in Mail & Guardian, 1 October 1999 : The Lubowski Files) ; Chris Hani was killed after refusing to entertain contracts that would become part of the notorious South African arms deal. (My material on this could not be published in South Africa, but it was in the Netherlands and elsewhere. Find a reference in English to it here : <http://www.afrika.no/Detailed/18008.html>.)

I am not arguing that 'oddball' theories should always be entertained. For example, when we say that Aids is caused by the HIV-virus, we are correct, because there is indeed vast scientific evidence to support this. I would question any medium that would give a stage to an Aids-denialist. However, the narrative 'Dulcie September was killed by apartheid death squads because there was a death squad that was killing ANC representatives in Europe' is highly questionable. All known facts contradict it. In such a case, I believe it is in the public interest that these findings, which took years to assemble and test, are not buried by the very media whose duty it is to inform citizens. If journalists, of all people, cannot at least present findings that contradict ruling superficial

narratives, then the citizen is left powerless to question these. Simple messages 'apartheid bad, ANC good' do not explain the complexity of arms deals and the enormous interests often found behind high-profile murders. Citizens deserve information that enables them to understand issues more in-depth.